

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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**GOV. GRAY DAVIS PROCLAIMS MAY 2003 AS
"DROWNING PREVENTION MONTH"****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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SACRAMENTO – Governor Gray Davis today proclaimed May 2003 as "Drowning Prevention Month" to increase public awareness about drownings, the leading cause of injury-related deaths among children under age 5 in California. Drownings occur each year in swimming pools, hot tubs and even five-gallon buckets.

"Approximately 80 children lose their lives in drowning accidents each year in California," said Cliff Allenby, director of the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS). "We are grateful for Governor Davis' support in helping to raise awareness about drowning as a potential cause for developmental disability in young children."

In addition to drowning, near-drowning accidents often leave victims with permanent disabilities. Currently, 615 persons with developmental disabilities receive services in California from DDS as a result of surviving near-drowning accidents.

Steps to avoid drowning accidents include close and constant supervision of children at all times near water and provision of multiple layers of protection, including pool fencing, gates, automatic sliding door closers, pool alarms and automatic safety covers.

Other safety guidelines published by the Drowning Prevention Foundation include the following:

- Never leave a child alone near water to answer the telephone or doorbell, to attend to another child or for household chores, even for a few seconds. At large gatherings designate an adult to watch children at play.
- Fence your pool on all four sides with a barrier that is at least five feet high. Move lawn chairs, tables and other potential climbing aids away from the fence to help keep out children.
- Any gate or door leading to the pool area should be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward, with the latch placed on the poolside and out of reach.
- Install panic alarms on all house doors and windows leading to the pool area, automatic sliding door closers and an automatic safety cover over the pool. Completely remove the cover before allowing children in the pool.
- Drain off water that accumulates on top of a pool cover. A child can drown in as little as two inches of water.

"Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices"

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- Keep reaching and throwing aids, such as poles and life preservers, on both sides of the pool.
- All non-swimmers should wear approved personal flotation devices (life vests) when they are near water and especially near rivers and streams.

Swimming lessons do not ensure safety. About 25 percent of all young drowning victims have had swimming lessons. A child who falls into water unexpectedly may panic and forget his or her swimming skills. Adults who serve as caretakers for children who swim should know how to swim themselves, and also how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in an emergency. Immediate CPR could prevent death or massive brain damage.

Contacts:

For a free brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Drowning Prevention Foundation, P. O. Box 202, Alamo, CA 94507. Telephone: 925/820-SAVE. Website: www.drownprevention.com

The American Red Cross and some local fire departments offer classes in adult, child and infant CPR. Contact your local agencies for class times and locations.

Attachment: “Drowning Prevention Month” Proclamation. The proclamation is also available on the DDS Internet Home Page: www.dds.ca.gov.

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